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"EPA lists top companies for commuters"



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EPA lists top companies for commuters

Less pollution and higher productivity cited as benefits

MSNBC News Services

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WASHINGTON - Intel, Fannie Mae and Cisco Systems top the U.S. government's list of largest companies that have the best commuting benefits for their employees.

The list, issued for the first time by the Environmental Protection Agency, ranks those companies that have subsidized transit or vanpool passes, telecommuting programs, bike lockers and showers, and other outstanding commuter benefits.

Congestion created from commuting to and from work wastes 5.7 billion gallons of fuel and 3.5 billion hours of lost productivity a year, costing the nation \$63.2 billion, the EPA estimates.

Every year, the top 20 companies in the list have reduced driving 250 million miles of driving, saved over 12 million gallons of gasoline and prevented more than 186,000 tons of global warming pollution, according to the EPA.

"By offering their employees commuter benefits, companies are improving employee recruiting and retention, increasing employee job satisfaction ... and they are also reducing air pollution and congestion," said Jeff Holmstead, EPA's assistant administrator of air and radiation.

The list is a first for the EPA, which intends to offer it each year.

Companies that make the EPA list offer at least three different types of commuter benefits to 15 percent or more of their employees, said Margo Oge, director of the agency's Office of Transportation and Air Quality.

"Through this program we can have significant environmental benefits like saving fuel and reducing pollution, greenhouse gases and congestion," she said.

Companies can deduct up to \$100 a month in commuting expenses they provide to each employee. Workers do not have to treat the benefit as income.

To qualify as one of the best workplaces for commuters, a company must be on the Fortune 500 list and provide:

- At least one primary commuter benefit such as a monthly transit/vanpool pass subsidy or a significant telecommuting program.
- At least three supporting commuter benefits, including carpool/vanpool incentives, lockers/showers for bikers or walkers, incentives to live near work, or onsite amenities such as day care or dry cleaning.
- A central point of contact who actively informs employees of available commuter benefits.
- Access to a regional or employer-provided guaranteed emergency ride home program.

To get the top spot on the list, Intel offers commuter benefits to almost 90 percent of its work force.

Additional information is online at www.bwc.gov.

* Reuters and The Associated Press contributed to this report.